

"Brooke Bond Tea".

Roy Gault.

The 75th anniversary of Brooke Bond 'PG Tips' has just been celebrated with commemorative boxes of Tea Bags, but the story behind Brooke Bond Tea goes back a lot further than 75 years.



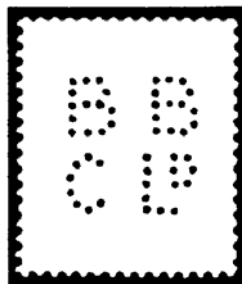
The founder of the company, Arthur Brooke (1845-1918), was born at Ashton-under-Lyne, the son of an established Tea Dealer, Charles Brooke. Arthur's first employment was in the cotton trade, but because of a decline in the trade due to disruptions in the supply of raw cotton during the American Civil War, he was taken on as a trainee (c1864) at Peek, Bros and Winch's wholesale tea company in Liverpool. He later transferred to London, but on hearing of his father's problems running the family business, he moved back to Ashton to help out, opening many new outlets for tea all over Lancashire.



Flushed with success, Arthur decided to set up on his own, and in 1869 he opened his first shop at 29 Market St, Manchester, to sell tea wholesale, as well as coffee and sugar. The sign above the door read "Brooke Bond & CJ, although there never was a Mr Bond!

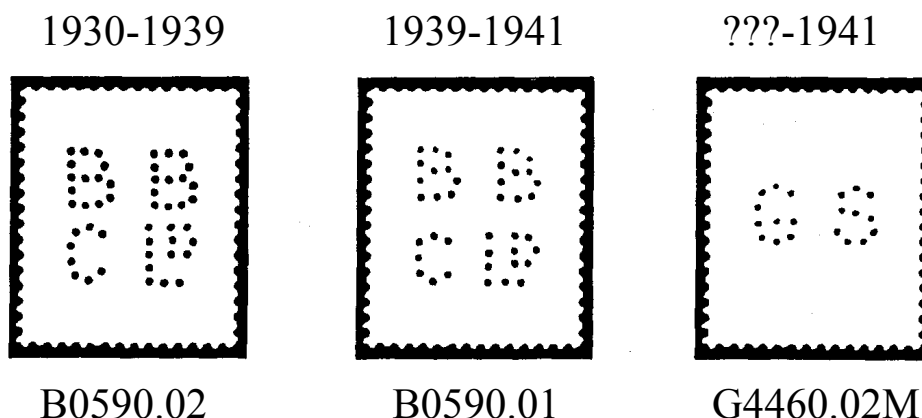
Soon more shops were opened in Liverpool, Leeds, Bradford, and in 1872, he moved his headquarters to London. He even went to America and opened a shop in Chicago. The first of four perfin dies used by the company seems to coincide with the company taking on Limited liability in 1892.

1892-1930

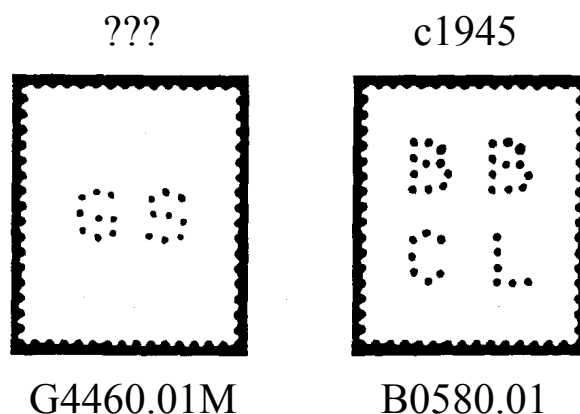


B0590.02a

1930 is the year in which 'PG Tips' was introduced, the name having been taken from the letters 'PG' scrawled on the chests of 'Pre-Gestive Tea'. A new die was used around this time and lasted until just before WWII. They also used a "GS" die, probably G4460.02M, but the significance of "GS" unknown.



The Sloper m/s ledger entries for Brooke Bond show a single headed "BB/CLd" die that would almost certainly have been destroyed in the blitz on Sloper's premises in May 1941. This die is thought to have been B0590.01, known only on issue 'Q' stamps. The replacement die was initially "GS" (G4460.01M) prior to a new die "BB/CL" (B0580.01) being made.



After the war, tea was not de-rationed until as late as 1952, but I'm sure many of you will remember the sets of 'Tea Cards' that Brooke bond introduced in 1954, and the PG Tips Chimps TV adverts which first appeared in December 1956. By then though, the use of perfin had been discontinued.

If anyone can add additional details of postmarks or dates to help further refine the date ranges stated for any of the dies illustrated, I would be pleased to hear from you.